



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**REGION 8, MONTANA OFFICE  
FEDERAL BUILDING, 301 S. PARK, DRAWER 10096  
HELENA, MONTANA 59626-0096**

Ref: 8MO

March 10, 2000

Mr. Keith Soderstrom, Project Leader  
Swan Lake Ranger District  
200 Ranger Station Road  
Bigfork, Montana 59911

Re: Meadow Smith Project Final Environmental  
Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Soderstrom:

In accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency, Region VIII, Montana Office (EPA) reviewed the above-referenced Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

We thank the Forest Service for being responsive to EPA's comments on the DEIS. (e.g., Appendix I describing monitoring, Appendix J describing Water Howellia habitats, etc.). We do not object to the preferred alternative, Alternative 1. The EPA particularly supports the 3 miles of new road restrictions and 3 miles of road reclamation and culvert replacement that are proposed with the action alternatives to improve wildlife security, road drainage, and fish passage. Improvements to forest road systems and reduction in road density are especially critical to protecting aquatic health and wildlife resources for the project area. We are also pleased that no activities are proposed along stream riparian areas, and that buffer zones will be designated that will meet current legal requirements with INFISH, Water Howellia Conservation Strategies and other guidelines.

The EPA reiterates that there is a need to conduct monitoring to determine ecological effects of the implementation of forest management activities. It is only through monitoring of ecological effects that the USFS will be able to determine whether management goals and objectives are being met.

The EPA appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the FEIS. If we may provide



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further explanation of our concerns please contact Mr. Steve Potts of my staff in Helena at (406) 441-1140 ext. 232.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by John F. Wardell

John F. Wardell  
Director  
Montana Office

cc: Cynthia Cody/Yolanda Martinez, EPA 8EPR-EP, Denver  
Earl Sutton, Forest Service-Region 1, EAPS, Missoula